

FINAL BILL REPORT

SHB 2474

C 141 L 08

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Modifying supervised experience requirements for social worker licenses.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Health Care & Wellness (originally sponsored by Representatives Cody, Wood, Morrell, Barlow and Green).

House Committee on Health Care & Wellness

Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections

Background:

Until 2001, counselors, including social workers and mental health counselors, were registered under the same law. In 2001 licensed social workers, licensed mental health counselors, and licensed marriage and family therapists became regulated by the Department of Health (DOH) under a separate law. Licensing requirements for all three professions include specific education, examination, and supervised experience requirements.

Licensed social workers may qualify for licensure in one of two categories: licensed advanced social workers or licensed independent clinical social workers. Each category requires an applicant to meet specified supervised experience requirements.

The supervised experience requirement for licensed social workers is specified in statute. For licensed advanced social workers, the experience requirement includes, among other things:

- a minimum of 3,200 hours of experience;
- ninety hours supervised by a licensed independent clinical social worker or a licensed advanced social worker who has been licensed at least two years;
- of those hours, 50 hours of direct supervision by a licensed independent clinical social worker or a licensed advanced social worker; the other 40 hours may be with an equally qualified licensed mental health practitioner; and
- at least 800 hours of direct client contact.

The supervised experience requirement for licensed independent clinical social workers, includes, among other things:

- a minimum of 4,000 hours of experience, with 1,000 hours of direct client contact supervised by a licensed independent clinical social worker who has been licensed at least five years and has had at least one year of clinical practice supervision experience;
- at least 130 hours supervised by a licensed mental health practitioner; and
- of the total supervision, 70 hours with an independent clinical social worker meeting the statutory experience requirements; the other 60 hours may be with an equally qualified licensed mental health practitioner.

Under DOH rules, the required experience for licensed social workers is supervised by an approved supervisor. An approved supervisor may be a licensed independent clinical social worker, a licensed advanced social worker (for licensed advanced social workers only), or an equally qualified licensed mental health practitioner. An "equally qualified licensed mental health practitioner" means a licensed mental health counselor, a licensed marriage and family therapist, a licensed psychologist, a licensed physician practicing as a psychiatrist, or a licensed psychiatric nurse practitioner.

Approved supervisors must meet certain requirements in the rules, including holding an unrestricted license for at least two years, completing certain supervisor training, and having, for licensed advanced social workers only, two years of clinical experience postlicensure or, for licensed independent clinical social workers only, five years of clinical experience postlicensure.

Summary:

For both categories of licensed social workers, some of the required supervised experience may be provided by an equally qualified licensed mental health practitioner. All of the licensed supervisors must be approved supervisors. For both categories, an approved supervisor must be licensed for at least two years (which reduces the five-year licensure requirement to two years when licensed independent clinical social worker applicants are supervised).

Additional changes are made to clarify the supervised experience requirements for licensed social workers and to organize these requirements in a more consistent format.

These changes apply retroactively to July 22, 2003.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	97	0	
Senate	49	0	(Senate amended)
House	95	0	(House concurred)

Effective: June 12, 2008